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PENNSYLVANIA PHARMACEUTICAL ASSOCIATION.

ANTINARCOTIC LEGISLATION—USE OF “MILS” IN PLACE OF “CC”—A MODERN PHARMACY LAW.

A report of the meeting, June 22-24, 1915, by MARTIN I. WILBERT, Technical Assistant, Division of Pharmacology, Hygienic Laboratory, United States Public Health Service.

In compliance with bureau orders, the writer attended the meeting of the Pennsylvania Pharmaceutical Association, held at Forest Park Hotel, Forest Park, Pike County, Pa., June 22-24, inclusive.

Among the many problems that were discussed at some length at this meeting, legislation, particularly antinarcotic legislation, appeared to attract the most attention. The Federal antinarcotic law and the several regulations that have been issued in connection therewith were discussed, and, as usual, considerable difference of opinion was manifested in regard not alone to the object of the law but also in regard to the probable effectiveness of the act as it now stands and the number and nature of and the need for the several regulations that have been issued.

The president, Edgar F. Heffner, of Lock Haven, in his annual address said in part:

The Harrison bill, long desired and worked for by those pharmacists who realize the true conditions concerning narcotics, has now been in force for four months and it has proved to be one of the most effective and beneficial laws ever passed by our national law making body. Of the classes affected by this law the retail drug trade has had to bear the most burdensome restrictions and has suffered from many arbitrary rulings. This burden has, however, been cheerfully assumed and every effort has been made to assist in making the law effective. We, as members of the retail drug trade, have unjustly borne for years a great deal more than our proper share of the responsibility for the traffic in narcotic drugs and, if for no other reason than that it has removed from our shoulders this burden, the Harrison law should be welcomed by every law-abiding pharmacist. Sensational magazines and newspapers will be compelled in the future to cease this form of attack on the drug business for the simple reason that the formation of a narcotic habit will in the future be possible only through the failure of physicians to obey the law or of the Federal Government to enforce it.

In the report of the committee on drug market, the opinion was expressed that the law has proven to be effective and that it has served to materially reduce the amount of habit-forming drugs

ordinarily disposed of in a retail way. One member of a large wholesale firm expressed the opinion that the Federal antinarcotic law had reduced the sale of narcotics 70 per cent, but ventured the suggestion that this was probably due to the excessively heavy sales shortly before the Federal law went into effect.

William L. Cliffe, of Philadelphia, in a paper on "State Antinarcotic Legislation," voiced the idea that the Federal law should suffice to regulate traffic in the proscribed drugs and that additional State legislation on this subject is not necessary.

Joseph W. England, in a communication on Treasury Decision No. 2213, expressed the opinion that the intent of this regulation was not in accord with the object of the law in that it is unjust and burdensome on the physician and apparently discriminates in favor of manufacturers of proprietary remedies. He offered a resolution requesting the Commissioner of Internal Revenue to amend the regulation so as to permit the renewal of prescriptions for limited quantities of narcotic drugs in accord with the amounts specified in section 6 of the act. This resolution was freely discussed at considerable length. After listening to a paper on "The Number and Kind of Drug Adicts," the members present declined to go on record in favor of having the regulation rescinded or amended.

The general discussion on these several communications elicited numerous expressions of opinion and the recounting of many experiences that are of interest in connection with efforts to enforce the present law.

It was generally asserted that the local collectors of internal revenue and their assistants, while willing to give information, were not well informed on the routine practices in connection with the sale and dispensing of drugs and that frequently the advice given by local men was directly contrary to regulations promulgated subsequently by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue or in conflict with information obtained from the Bureau of Internal Revenue direct.

Several members expressed the opinion that up to the present time varied kinds of irregularity in connection with the issuance of licenses and the use or nonuse of the official order blanks have become evident. One member asserted that a registered pharmacist in the State of Pennsylvania, who is not at present engaged in running a drug store, was able to secure registration and is now purchasing on official order blanks, morphine for a person who is habituated to the use of this drug.

Several members also reported prescriptions for unusual quantities of morphine and other narcotic drugs. One member reported having seen a prescription for 3 ounces of morphine brought to his store, which he refused to fill. Another member asserted that prescriptions for the equivalent of 1 pint of tincture of opium are not uncommon

and that physicians in some sections are securing large amounts of the several drugs and preparations on prescriptions for use in their offices.

Some of the members present asserted that the number of prescriptions for narcotic drugs in their stores had increased very materially and several of the members who are engaged in the wholesale business expressed the opinion that their sales of narcotics had increased greatly. In discussing the latter statement one member ventured the opinion that dealers who formerly purchased comparatively large quantities directly from the manufacturer now distributed their orders for narcotic drugs so as to avoid as much as possible any suspicion that might be aroused by a frequent repetition of orders or by orders for unusually large quantities.

A somewhat amusing experience was related by one member who was consulted in connection with an apparent discrepancy in the records of a retail druggist who had overlooked the fact that he purchased avoirdupois quantities and used apothecary or Troy weights in dispensing them.

It was generally agreed that the law has as yet not been enforced for a sufficient length of time to determine what, if any, effect it will have on the consumption of narcotic drugs and it was also generally agreed that newspaper reports regarding fatalities from the withdrawal of the several drugs are not based on fact and in some instances are misleading in that deaths from other causes have been attributed to the withdrawal of morphine or opium.

In connection with a discussion by the chairman of the United States Pharmacopœia Committee of Revision, on the use of the word "mils" in place of the abbreviation "cc.," the association adopted the following resolution:

Whereas the cubic centimeter is not the equivalent of the thousandth part of a liter; and

Whereas the generally used abbreviations Cc., cc., C. c., c. c., Ccm., C. cm., C₃, and C_□, are numerous, varied, and not in accord with or adaptable to the American and English practices of measuring liquids; and

Whereas the word mil is now officially adopted as the designation for the one-thousandth part of a liter and is well adapted for use as a designation for smaller fractions of liquid medicines: Now therefore be it

Resolved, That the members of the Pennsylvania Pharmaceutical Association, in meeting assembled, indorse the action of the revision committee of the Pharmacopœia of the United States of America, and pledge their support in the way of popularizing this name.

The paper entitled "The Pharmacy of Useful Drugs" elicited considerable discussion, several members calling attention to the several difficulties involved in exercising any comprehensive control of drugs and medicines and the cost of systematically examining preparations.

In a discussion on future legislation the draft of a modern pharmacy law proposed by a conference organized under the auspices of the Section on Education and Legislation of the American Pharmaceutical Association was discussed and the general principles embodied in the several provisions were indorsed. The following two provisions, which apply more directly to the sale of poisons and of ready-made medicines, are of interest in that, enacted into law, they should serve to protect the health of the public by giving fair warning of possible untoward manifestations or harmful activities of potent drugs. They might also serve as the basis for discussion in connection with proposed Federal legislation to control the interstate shipment of various poisons:

All chemicals and drugs the maximum adult dose of which according to standard authorities on medicine or *materia medica* is one drachm or less, either fluid or solid, as also compounds and preparations containing such chemicals and drugs, and inclusive especially of morphine, opium, heroin, chloroform, alcohol, cannabis indica, chloral hydrate, and acetanilid, or any derivatives or preparations of said substances, are hereby defined to be of potent character: *Provided*, That drugs herein not specially named the maximum adult dose of which is greater than one (1) drachm, but containing active principles of lesser maximum adult dose, as well as compounds and preparations of such drugs, shall be construed to be of potent character only when they contain the isolated active principle as such, and not as a constituent of the original drug.

All chemicals, drugs, their compounds and preparations, of potent character as herein defined, when intended for use as medicines, shall be dispensed, distributed, or sold only in containers bearing a label for ready inspection, upon which such potent drug content is plainly shown, as also the percentage of such drugs contained therein: *Provided*, That when such chemicals and drugs are dispensed in keeping with a written record as made by a licensed physician, dentist, or veterinarian, and such written record is retained or filed by the pharmacist, physician, dentist, or veterinarian, the label requirement herein shall be satisfied when the container of the chemicals and drugs so dispensed contains a number or mark corresponding with a number or mark on the written record, so that it may be readily identified.

This draft of a modern law pertaining to pharmacy is to be considered at other meetings of State pharmaceutical associations and is to be discussed at length at the sessions of the Section on Education and Legislation of the American Pharmaceutical Association at its annual meeting in San Francisco in August.

Among the more interesting papers of a pharmaceutical nature was one by Charles H. La Wall on "Poudre de Riz." The systematic examination of a number of preparations of this type revealed the fact that very few contain rice starch and that many consist largely of more or less harmful mineral ingredients. It was also pointed out that under present-day interpretations of a drug the Federal and many of the State food and drug laws do not apply to preparations sold as cosmetics.